

Equalization Schools in South Carolina 1951-1959



Rebekah Dobrasko
February 2008

© 2008 by Rebekah Dobrasko
All Rights Reserved

I. Historical Overview of Equalization Program

In 1951, South Carolina passed its first general sales tax in order to fund a statewide program of school construction. Newly-elected governor James Byrnes developed a school construction and improvement package in response to *Briggs v. Elliott*, a lawsuit based in Clarendon County challenging the state's constitutional "separate but equal" education provision. This "equalization" program was intended to construct new African American elementary and high schools across South Carolina to circumvent a potential desegregation ruling by the Supreme Court. The multi-million dollar school building campaign utilized modern school design, materials, and architecture to build new rural, urban, black, and white schools in communities throughout the state.¹

The schools constructed as part of South Carolina's school equalization program represent the intersection of modern, national architectural trends and the postwar baby boom with South Carolina's fight to maintain racially-segregated public schools. The state's modern schools were funded by a three-cent sales tax designed to equalize black and white public schools. Nationally-recognized educational consultants worked with local and county school architects to design these new "equalization" schools based on postwar thinking about educational processes and architecture. The new design trends were applied to both black and white schools, resulting in materially equal school plants.

In the decades before *Briggs*, South Carolina's General Assembly appropriated very little money for either white or black schools compared to other southern states. Several surveys and reports of South Carolina's public school system illustrated the deficiencies in funding and in the organization of the state's public schools. North Carolina spent \$12 million more per year on its system of public education.² In 1941, South Carolina Governor Burnet Maybank established a legislative committee to study the state's public education system. A part of the committee's report focused on the inequalities in

Cover photograph: Carlsan Elementary School, Carlisle, Union County. Photograph by Rebekah Dobrasko, 2006.

¹ For more information on the equalization school program, see Rebekah Dobrasko, "Upholding 'Separate but Equal': South Carolina's School Equalization Program, 1951-1955" (M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 2005) and William Green and Heather Jones, "Mitigation of Adverse Effects to the Bucksport Elementary School, Bucksport Workforce Center Project, Horry County, South Carolina," (Report by S&ME, Inc. submitted to Horry County, August 2007). Howard Quint's *Profile in Black and White: A Frank Portrait of South Carolina* (Washington, DE: Public Affairs Press, 1958) provides a contemporary account of South Carolina's struggles for and against desegregation in public education and in other institutions across the state. For more information on the *Briggs v. Elliott* court case, see Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004); James Clyburn with Jennifer Revels, *Uncommon Courage: The Story of Briggs v. Elliott, South Carolina's Unsung Civil Rights Battle* (Spartanburg, SC: Palmetto Conservation Foundation/PCF Press, 2004); J.A. DeLaine, Jr., *Briggs v. Elliott: Clarendon County's Quest for Equality* (Pine Brook, NJ: O. Gona Press, 2003); Sonny Dubose, *The Road to Brown: The Leadership of a Soldier of the Cross Reverend J.A. DeLaine* (Orangeburg, SC: Williams Publishing, 2002).

² Division of Surveys and Field Services, George Peabody College for Teachers, *Public Schools of South Carolina: A Report of the South Carolina Education Survey Committee* (Nashville, TN: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1948) (hereafter Peabody Survey), 297.

schooling between the races. Nineteen counties lacked black high schools, and only eight buses in the state transported black children to school.³

South Carolina's educational system did not improve much after this report. Well-publicized figures reported that approximately one-third of all of South Carolina's World War II draftees did not pass the Army's intelligence tests, which measured the level of education and critical thinking of the draftees. In 1951, the Army continued to reject 60.7 percent of South Carolina's young men for failing intelligence tests or because they lacked a high school education.⁴

In 1947, with the support of Governor Strom Thurmond, the General Assembly commissioned a statewide survey of the public school system. The George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee conducted the survey and published their findings in 1948. The Peabody survey team interviewed parents, teachers, and students across the state to determine the needs of South Carolina's educational system. The survey also examined elementary, secondary, and vocational education, teacher training and administrative personnel, state and local educational organization and administration, school buildings, the transportation system, and the state system of financing the public schools.⁵

The Peabody survey highlighted the inequalities between rural and urban schools as well as differences in funding, transportation, teacher training, and school facilities between black and white schools and made recommendations to improve the school system. In 1947, South Carolina had 1,680 school districts. Spartanburg County alone had ninety-five. These small school districts often lacked funds and administrative support and ran small one- and two-teacher schools to serve the children in the area. Seventy percent of these small schools were for African American students. The survey recommended consolidating these small schools with other schools in an area to increase the local tax base. Additionally, the survey suggested implementing a county-wide system of school administration which would consolidate smaller districts so that the rural schools of South Carolina would benefit from taxes raised in the cities within the same county. A county system of school administration would be able to better utilize money and increase its funding, which could then be used to raise teacher salaries in the schools and improve and maintain school buildings and equipment.⁶

The statistics on school buildings and facilities in the state reflected the extreme disparity between black and white schools, both in rural and urban areas. In 1947, the school plant

³ For statistics on local spending and yearly reports of the Supervisor of Rural Schools and the State Agent for Negro Schools, see the Annual Reports of the State Superintendent of Education of the State of South Carolina, published in the *Reports and Resolutions of South Carolina to the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina*. Quint, *Profile*, 9.

⁴ Address by James F. Byrnes, 12 June 1950, folder 13, box 1, James Byrnes Collection, Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, South Carolina (hereafter CSC); James Byrnes, "Election Eve," November 1950, folder 1, box 12, CSC; "38.7% in South Fail Draft Mental Test," *New York Times*, 18 February 1951.

⁵ Peabody Survey.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 167-179, 193.

investment for whites totaled approximately \$221 per pupil. The school plants for blacks reflected an investment of \$45 per pupil. Economic pressures during the Depression and the scarcity of building materials during World War II meant that the state constructed few schools for several decades. Schools across the state were in varying stages of disrepair, and the differences between rural and urban schools were especially stark. Overcrowded classrooms, overworked teachers, and the lack of running water and electricity in many of the rural schools compounded educational problems. The survey estimated that the state and local school boards needed to invest ninety million dollars to improve school building facilities and bring South Carolina's schools close to the national average in school buildings and equipment.⁷

The white politicians in the state, however, did not consider funding educational improvements, especially for black schools, until *Briggs v. Elliott* entered the federal district court in late 1950. The *Briggs* lawsuit demanded an end to racially segregated educational facilities in rural Clarendon County. The *Briggs* case eventually merged with four other school desegregation cases on appeal before the United States Supreme Court to become part of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision. The threat of integration in South Carolina caused politicians to pour money into the state's public school system, materially improving schools for both black and white children across the state.

Governor James Byrnes developed an equalization legislative package in response to *Briggs v. Elliott* and based his recommendations on the 1947 Peabody survey and a 1950 report from the House of Representatives supporting a sales tax to fund educational improvements. Byrnes recommended a three-cent sales tax to fund a statewide school building program. He also recommended a bond issue of \$75 million as a quick fundraiser for the educational program. The General Assembly would use the proceeds from the sales tax to pay the interest and principal on these bonds.⁸

The equalization program, as part of the state's strategy to prevent an adverse Supreme Court decision, attempted to improve and equalize schools for both black and white children. The General Assembly required school districts to consolidate smaller schools and districts, abolished all local boards of education with less than seven members, and required newly-created school districts to survey the building needs of their schools before receiving money from the state. The Educational Finance Commission (EFC) supervised these changes and reviewed applications for building funds. The stated goal of the commission was to oversee "the needs for new construction, new equipment, new

⁷ Ibid., 192-208.

⁸ Address of the Honorable James F. Byrnes, Governor of South Carolina to the General Assembly, Columbia, SC, Wednesday, January 24, 1951; Address of James F. Byrnes, Governor of South Carolina, to the South Carolina Education Association in Annual Meeting in Township Auditorium at Columbia, S.C., at 8 p.m., March 16, 1951, Speeches and Press Releases, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDH.

transportation facilities, and such other improvements as are necessary to enable all children of South Carolina to have adequate and equal educational advances.”⁹

The EFC had the power to approve school construction plans and district consolidation and distributed state funds to school districts with the intent of equalizing facilities between the races. It gave districts with obvious disparities in black school buildings priority in receiving funding.¹⁰ The commission also distributed a guide for project architects and administrators applying for funds, as the law required school districts to hire registered architects to draw plans and to hire licensed contractors to complete the work. The commission approved all new school sites before the architect developed plans for a new school building. Plans submitted for approval were required to include topographical plots, plans of all floors of the new school, elevations, furniture layouts that represented specialized classrooms like home economic rooms or science laboratories, and a description of materials planned for construction. Architects submitted preliminary and final plans for approval as well as any plans for the remodeling or rehabilitation for existing school buildings.¹¹ The EFC’s control over local building plans ensured that schools would be properly planned according to the county’s previously-submitted school plant survey.

The major obstacle to the school equalization program and educational reform on the local level stemmed from the racist views of local school officials. Local officials refused to supplement the statewide equalization campaign by appropriating local funds to support equalization. White officials wanted to secure funds solely for white school building projects, and the Educational Finance Commission denied many local requests for funding because the school district had not addressed the needs of black schools. The EFC refused to authorize white school construction projects for a district if the district had not filed plans for black school construction. Although the school construction campaign was intended for black school construction, the EFC and Governor Byrnes realized that South Carolina’s white students needed new schools as well. Funding white school construction also appeased some of the white opponents who did not believe that a statewide sales tax should be used to fund education for black students.¹²

Many local officials opposed equalization to the point that they did not apply for any funding from the state. In Lee County, the first building construction project did not occur until 1953, two years after the state began granting funds. Charleston County school officials advocated equal distribution of the county’s building allocations among

⁹ “Excerpts from General Appropriations Act,” Publications, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH. The EFC was a separate commission from the Department of Education until it was absorbed by the Department in 1966.

¹⁰ “Excerpts from General Appropriations Act,” Publications; Press-radio release, 22 April 1951, Speeches and Press Releases, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH.

¹¹ “A Guide for School Architects and School Administrators Dealing with School Plants,” State Agencies, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH.

¹² “Third Annual Message of Governor James F. Byrnes to the South Carolina General Assembly, prepared for delivery expected at 12:30 p.m., Wednesday, January 14, 1953,” Speeches and Press Releases; “Radio Report to the People by Governor James F. Byrnes,” 11 May 1951, Speeches and Press Releases; McCullough, “Educational Revolution,” Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH.

its schools, despite an existing \$671,200 disparity between black and white schools in the county. To combat the feelings and maneuverings of local white school officials, the EFC maintained their right to approve or disapprove building projects to ensure equalization.¹³

Some districts built new black schools but did not appropriate enough money to furnish equipment for the new schools. Officials did not fully complete a black school project in Saluda. The new school lacked a planned wing supposed to contain twelve additional classrooms and lacked adequate equipment. Administrators in Charleston County refused to authorize construction of an additional black high school to replace one that had previously closed.¹⁴

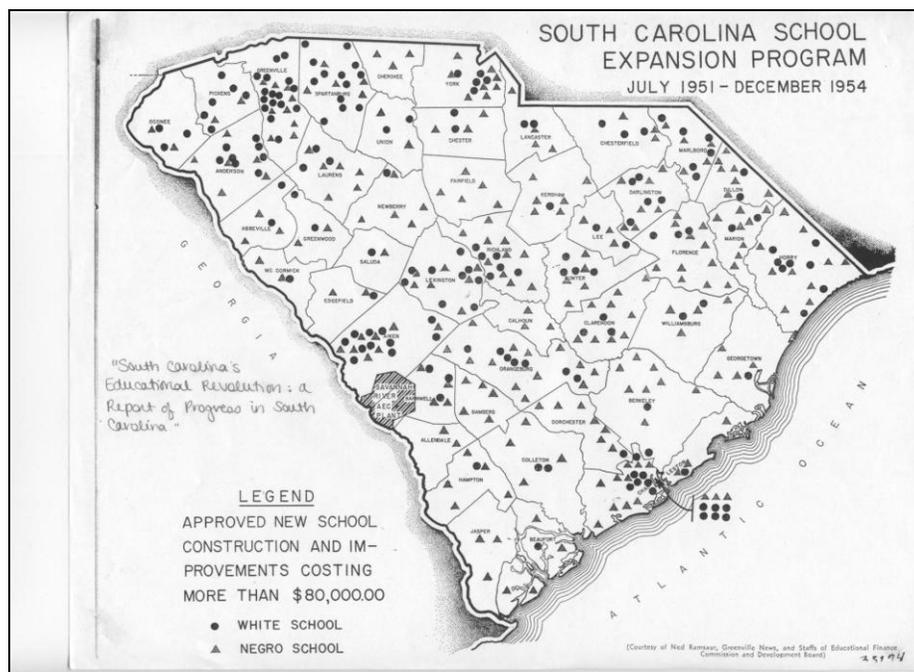


Figure 1. Educational Finance Commission map showing statewide distribution of schools.¹⁵

The end of World War II, and the results of social changes and technological developments associated with the war, brought changes in architecture and changes in education to America. Since the war limited building opportunities as materials such as

¹³ McCullough, "Educational Revolution," Speeches and Press Releases; E.R. Crow to James F. Byrnes, 7 October 1952, State Agencies, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDH; Address of Governor James F. Byrnes to the South Carolina Education Association in Columbia, SC, March 25, 1954, folder 7, box 14, James F. Byrnes Collection, CSC; "Contract for Half Million Dollar Negro School Let," *Lee County Messenger*, 5 November 1953; Millicent Brown, "Civil Rights Activism in Charleston, South Carolina, 1940-1970," PhD. diss, Florida State University, 1997, 71.

¹⁴ Robert S. Logan to Thurgood Marshall, 27 September 1954; Dorothy Cable, "New Negro School Finished but Empty of all Equipment," no newspaper name, 20 January 1955, Part 3, Series C, reel 2, NAACP Papers; Brown, "Civil Rights Activism," 74.

¹⁵ "South Carolina's Educational Revolution: A Report of Progress in South Carolina," (Columbia: State Educational Finance Commission, c. 1955).

wood and steel and labor were devoted to war industries, construction boomed once these materials became readily available. Returning soldiers resulted in an increase in the United States' birth rate, and educators and school districts realized the need to expand school plants to educate these "baby boomers." Architects, designers, school administrators, and educational consultants began publishing guidance for new schools.¹⁶

Educators and architects realized that the school buildings of the past were not conducive to learning in the present. Desks and chairs were often nailed to the floor, limiting the mobility of teachers and students in the classroom. Air circulation and lighting in classrooms could be improved. The need for change led to distinct, postwar 1950s schools. The most significant architectural change was driven by the need to easily expand the schools. One-story, flat-roofed buildings accommodated additions; eliminated the need for staircases and fire escapes; provided easy access to the outside for students; and provided better light and ventilation for classrooms. The smaller-scaled schools had psychological benefits as well. As one architect discovered, "We want buildings which are friendly to children. We believe that the low-lying, sprawled-out type of building, close to the ground, one story high, straight in its lines, honestly functional, is less awe-inspiring and more friendly in the eyes of the child, though it may not look as grand to adults as some of our multi-storied Roman efforts."¹⁷

The need for better lighting and ventilation in classrooms led to the distinctive walls of windows along the façades of the equalization schools. Lighting was an important study point in designing new school plans, and planning books and architectural discussions devoted many articles and pages to lighting issues. Architects employed design materials, such as glass blocks, that doubled as a technique to control lighting in the schools.¹⁸ Florence Benson Elementary School in Columbia had interior windows to provide lighting to its classrooms from the hallway (Figure 2).

¹⁶ For contemporary discussions of educational trends, planning, and architecture, see C. William Brubaker, *Planning and Designing Schools* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998); Edward A. Campbell, "New Spaces and Places for Learning," *The School Review* 68 (Autumn 1960): 346-352; William W. Caudill, *Toward Better School Design*, (New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1954); William W. Cutler, III, "Cathedral of Culture: The Schoolhouse in American Educational Thought and Practice Since 1820," *History of Education Quarterly* 29 (Spring 1989): 1-40; Engelhardt et al., *School Planning*; Engelhardt et al., *Planning Elementary School Buildings*; N.L. Engelhardt, N.L. Engelhardt, Jr., and Stanton Leggett, *Planning Secondary School Buildings* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1949); N.L. Engelhardt, Jr., "Trends in School Architecture and Design," *Review of Educational Research* 12 (April 1942): 171-177; 1958 NSCS Guide; Charles S. Johnson, "Next Steps in Education in the South," *Phylon (1940-1956)* 15 (First Quarter 1954): 7-20; Reginald E. Marsh, "Trend in Materials and Design," *Review of Educational Research* 15 (February 1945): 54-60; W.D. McClurkin, *School Building Planning* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1964); Walter McQuade, ed., *Schoolhouse* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958); National Council of Chief State School Officers, *Planning Rural Community School Buildings* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949); Pawley, *AIA School Plant Studies*; William C. Reavis, "Functional Planning of School-Building Programs," *The Elementary School Journal* 46 (October 1945): 72-80; Kenneth Reid, ed., *School Planning: The Architectural Record of a Decade* (New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1951); and Wallace H. Strevall and Arvid J. Burke, *Administration of the School Building Program* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959).

¹⁷ Reid, *School Planning*, 263; National Council of Chief State School Officers, *Rural Community*, 38; 1958 NCSC Guide, 50; Engelhardt et al, *School Planning*, 252; McQuade, *Schoolhouse*, 85-86.

¹⁸ Engelhardt et al, *School Planning*, 252; Marsh, "Trends in Materials and Design," 55.



Figure 2. Florence Benson Elementary School (black), c. 1954, Columbia, South Carolina
Photograph by Rebekah Dobrasko, 2007

Changes in secondary school curricula and education led to changes in high school layouts after World War II. Many high schools began to offer specialized vocational and academic training to prepare students for college or for the workforce. School districts began to offer agricultural classes, home economics, and specialized science classes, which required specific classrooms with particular equipment. The “campus plan” emerged as a response to this new curriculum. Schools constructed on the campus plan consisted of several different buildings dedicated to different courses and specializations (Figure 3).¹⁹

¹⁹ NCSC Guide, 92; Engelhardt et al, *Planning Secondary School Buildings*, 40-41. High schools in South Carolina constructed on the campus plan include Burke Vocational School in Charleston, James Island High School on James Island, and Brewer High School in Greenwood. Burke High School had buildings for science labs, home economics, administration, and art.

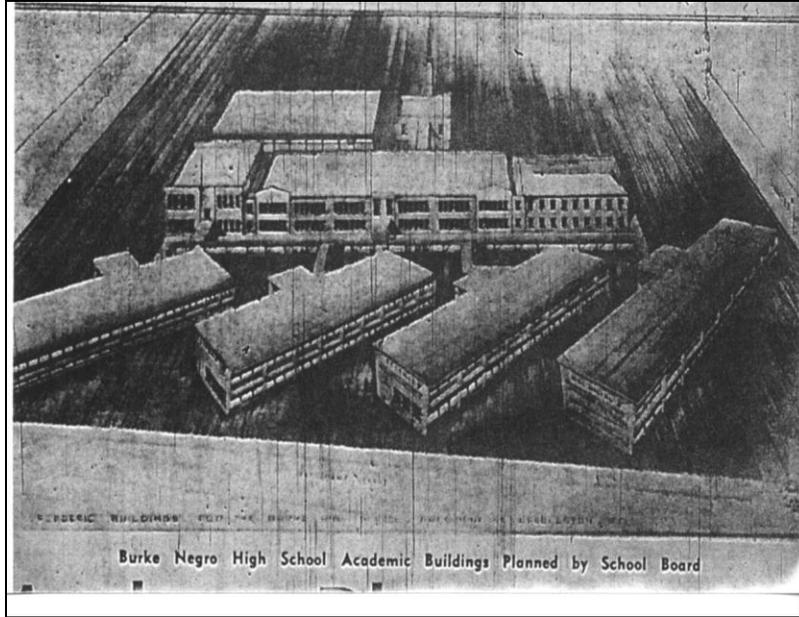


Figure 3. Architect's Model of New Burke High School (black) showing campus plan
 Photograph courtesy of *Charleston News and Courier*, 28 September 1952

II. National Register of Historic Places Eligibility

Equalization schools are considered significant under the National Register of Historic Places Criterion A for historic trends in Education and in Ethnic Heritage—Black, and Criterion C for architectural design trends typical of an era.²⁰ Most equalization schools will be significant at the local level of significance.

South Carolina's school equalization program was implemented after a direct threat to segregated public schools in the form of *Briggs v. Elliott*. This threat to the racial status quo caused the state's politicians to spend millions of dollars in an attempt to equalize black school facilities. Although the program never achieved true equalization between black and white public schools, it resulted in the construction of hundreds of schools across South Carolina. The equalization school program required all schools to be designed by an architect, and architects used a national school architecture language, producing distinctive one-story schools with rows of windows and modern materials.

Although the Educational Finance Commission existed until 1966 when it was absorbed into the state Department of Education, most of the equalization work of the commission

²⁰ Criterion A properties are associated with either a specific event marking an important moment in American prehistory or history or a pattern of events or a historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a State, or the nation. Criterion C properties either embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; or represent the work of a master; or possess high artistic value; or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. For more information, see United States Department of the Interior, *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, 1997).

ended around 1959. The EFC pushed for all approved black high schools to be completed and open for the 1955-1956 school year. As districts finished construction and improvement of black schools, the EFC funded more white school construction projects.²¹ School construction funding equalized between the races in the 1960s, as more and more African American students and parents pushed for the desegregation of South Carolina's public schools. The majority of the equalization schools were constructed between 1951 and 1959.

III. Property Types

The property types associated with this historic context are school buildings constructed between 1951 and c. 1960 as part of South Carolina's effort to equalize black and white schools in local and county school districts. Both black and white schools were constructed with equalization funds with an emphasis on black school construction from 1951 to about 1956. Some existing schools received substantial renovations or additions under the equalization program. The majority of the schools constructed in the 1950s follow the patterns extolled in post-war school construction manuals. The schools are one- or two-stories high. Most two-story schools are found in urban areas, but some two-story schools can be found in rural areas.²² The schools have flat roofs, or roofs with a very gentle pitch. Flat roofs allowed easy expansion and also reflect streamlined Modern architecture that was prevalent in the United States after World War II. Both rural and urban schools have courtyards or are sited with ball fields and outdoor recreation opportunities. Outdoor functions were considered essential to learning and education, and even urban schools were constructed with courtyards or with access to adjacent play areas to enable students to spend a portion of their day outside.²³

²¹ E.R. Crow to County Superintendents of Education, 6 April 1954, Speeches and Press Releases,; Press-radio release, 31 August 1954, Speeches and Press Releases, Governor James F. Byrnes Papers, SCDAH; "Text of Timmerman's Address to General Assembly," *The State*, 27 January 1955; "Building Projects, January 10, 1963," Topical Files, Governor Ernest F. Hollings Papers, SCDAH; Francis Marion Kirk, *South Carolina Education, 1710-1965* (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Education, 1966), 58.

²² Both Memminger Elementary (white) and Courtenay Elementary (black) in Charleston, South Carolina are examples of two-story schools. The Edgewood High School (black) in Ninety-Six has a two-story classroom wing.

²³ Brewer High School (black) in Greenwood was constructed adjacent to fields used for sports and recreation. Memminger Elementary (white) in Charleston has a courtyard used for outdoor recreation.

Common Characteristics/Features

The new schools took advantage of innovative materials and technologies developed during World War II. Most new schools were constructed of concrete frames with brick veneer. In Charleston County, many of the new schools had cast stone entryways, which is a characteristic of the equalization program.²⁴ Metal windows, typically aluminum, were used in the majority of the schools across the state to provide lighting to classrooms as well as ventilation. The metal windows reflected the technological developments that showed South Carolina's equalization schools as modern and efficient for both black and white students (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Central Elementary School (white), 1957, Lancaster, South Carolina
Photograph by Rebekah Dobrasko, 2007

Many existing schools received substantial additions as part of the equalization school construction program. Although the older portions of the school may not reflect the building trends of the post-war era, the flat roofs, metal windows, and brick veneer clearly identify the 1950s additions. Chicora Elementary School in North Charleston was constructed in the 1920s, and it received an addition in 1955 (Figure 5). The historic section reflects the traditional architecture of the 1920s, and the 1955 addition shows the streamlined, modern architecture popular after World War II (Figure 6). Dennis High School in Lee County is listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its significance in African American education. The Lee County School Board built a Modern addition to the original Classical Revival style Dennis High School as part of its equalization program. This addition contributes to the historic significance of Dennis High.²⁵

²⁴ Examples include Morningside Elementary (white), Dorchester Terrace Elementary (white), Six Mile Elementary (black), and W. Gresham Meggett High and Elementary (black), all in Charleston County.

²⁵ See Michael Edmonds, "Dennis High School, Bishopville, Lee County, South Carolina" National Register of Historic Places nomination, South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, listed 26 January 2005.



Figure 5. Chicora Elementary School (white), c.1920, North Charleston, South Carolina
Photograph by Rebekah Dobrasko, 2005



Figure 6. Chicora Elementary School (white), 1955 addition, North Charleston, South Carolina
Photograph courtesy of Charleston County School Board

The equalization schools were designed to take maximum advantage of air flow and natural light in the classrooms. Consequently, as schools began to install central air and heating, school districts viewed the walls of windows as energy deficient and began infilling the openings. School districts no longer wanted to financially maintain the large number of windows that were required as part of the postwar school. Many of the equalization schools may retain their historic window openings, but smaller windows have been installed and the larger window openings filled with brick, concrete block, or wood (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Scott's Branch High School (black), 1952, Summerville, South Carolina
Photograph by Rebekah Dobrasko, 2007

As many of the equalization schools reach or surpass 50 years of age, district administration sees the buildings as outdated or in need of serious rehabilitation. Education architecture has changed dramatically in the past 50 years, requiring new schools to be sited on large tracts of land, usually on the outskirts of a community. Often, the equalization schools are abandoned in favor of new schools. Some are demolished or sit vacant while others find new uses. Brewer High School in Greenwood was converted for use as a community center, offices, and an after-school program center, while Silverstreet Elementary School in Newberry County sits vacant and deteriorating (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Silverstreet Elementary School, 1956 addition, Newberry County, South Carolina
Photograph by Rebekah Dobrasko, 2007

Integrity

Several criteria must be met for equalization schools to retain their historic integrity. Schools must be newly constructed in the 1950s as part of the equalization program. This information can be found in newspapers, other archival sources, or on plaques in the interior of schools that show the date of construction, the architects, and the builders of the school. The historic window openings must be retained. The window sashes may be replaced as long as the window openings are still majority glass. Window air conditioning units are often found within the window openings (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Dorchester Terrace Elementary School (white), 1955, North Charleston, South Carolina
Photograph by Rebekah Dobrasko, 2005

The official, formal entrance to the school should be retained and used. Rooflines should remain flat or slightly pitched. Additions to the school shall be clearly defined and should not overwhelm the historic school. Additions should be on the side or the rear of the building, and attached by hyphens or walkways.²⁶ Original signage should also be considered in determining the school's integrity.

²⁶ The additions and changes to James Island High School (white) render it ineligible for the National Register due to lack of integrity because of the new addition and new entrance to the school, although the historic campus plan of the school is still extant behind the new façade. Central Elementary (black) on Edisto Island is eligible for the National Register, despite a new addition. The addition is sensitive in scale and materials to the historic school.



Figure 10. Original Signage for the W. Gresham Meggett High and Elementary School (black), now Septima Clark Corporate Academy, 1953, James Island, South Carolina
Photograph by Rebekah Dobrasko, 2005

One of the biggest threats to equalization schools is a lack of knowledge or understanding of their history. The schools represent the culmination of a long history of segregated education in South Carolina, and are also indicative of the state's role in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.²⁷ As school districts seek ways to upgrade their school plants, many of the 1950s schools are rehabilitated and lose their historic integrity. Other schools are abandoned and demolished in favor of new school buildings that represent the state of education in the twenty-first century. While not all equalization schools can be saved and reused, the surviving campuses serve as a physical reminder of both local and state educational, political, and racial history.

²⁷ For documentation and a history of African American education in South Carolina as it applies to buildings, see Katherine Richardson, "African-American Primary and Secondary Public School Buildings in South Carolina, ca. 1895-1954," Multiple Property Submission to the National Register of Historic Places, listed 15 April 1996.

IV. Information Sources

Documentation and information about equalization schools can be found in a wide variety of public and private information sources. The majority of the information will be found in local repositories and from local sources, although some information can be found at regional and state repositories.

The South Carolina State Archives has limited information on the state equalization program. The Educational Finance Commission was a separate entity until 1966 when it was absorbed into the Department of Education. The Department's records from the 1950s were in poor condition when transferred to the Archives, so few records remain of the Educational Finance Commission. The State Archives did microfilm several rolls of blueprints from schools constructed during the equalization period. Governor James F. Byrnes' papers and the papers of Governor George Bell Timmerman, Jr. have lists of schools constructed as part of the equalization program and also have lists of money spent for new school construction. The South Carolina State Library has copies of the few publications made by the State Educational Finance Commission.

County educational records can be found either at the State Archives or with the local school boards. Charleston County School District has an archive and records office with copies of architectural plans and drawings, school board meeting minutes, and historic photographs. Other school districts, like the Greenville County School District, relied on individual schools to maintain building records and blueprints.

Local newspapers covered the school construction campaigns and are one of the more reliable sources of information on equalization schools. Local newspapers often have photographs of the new schools constructed in the 1950s, and can provide dates of construction. In addition, newspapers often reported on the struggles to equalize black school facilities in the local community. Historic maps, such as highway maps or topographic maps, can show locations and footprints of historic schools. Other local, private sources could have information on equalization schools such as historical societies and local history rooms in libraries.

The equalization program required all school districts to survey their existing schools and make recommendations for consolidation. These school surveys can be found at local libraries or at local university archives. Local organizations may have published histories on local education or of local schools. The Greenville County School District published a book in 2000 on all its current schools. Many of the schools were constructed as part of the 1950s equalization program, and this book identifies the schools and provides a history of the school and any changes to its physical plant. The alumni of Brewer High School published a book on the school that discusses the impact of school consolidation and the equalization program to African Americans in Greenwood County.²⁸ Oral

²⁸ Debbie Willingham, ed., *The Stories of Our Schools: The School District of Greenville County*, (Greenville, SC: Greenville County School District, 2000); Robert Moore, Edith Childs, and Wilhelmina Robinson, *Brewer High School: More than a School* (Donalds, SC: Voice of Truths, LLC, 2005).

histories and interviews with members of the community can identify equalization schools and can be useful in determining the location of schools that no longer exist.

V. List of Known Schools and Resources

The South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office is recognizing the historical significance of the equalization schools and is encouraging identification efforts among members of the local community. Some schools are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and others are identified in survey reports and by the community. Below is a partial list of known equalization schools in South Carolina:

Eligible or Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

Berkeley County:

St. Stephen-Russellville High School (black), 1956, St. Stephen, Berkeley County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Charleston County:

Central Elementary School (black), 1953, Edisto Island, Charleston County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Chicora Elementary School (white), addition in 1955, North Charleston, Charleston County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Columbus Street Elementary School (black), 1955, Charleston, Charleston County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Courtenay Elementary School (white), 1955, Charleston, Charleston County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Cut Bridge Elementary School (black), 1955, Charleston, Charleston County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Dorchester Terrace Elementary School (white), 1952, North Charleston, Charleston County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

East Bay Elementary School (black), 1953, Charleston, Charleston County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places **UPDATE: East Bay Elementary School was demolished in 2007**

Gresham Meggett High and Elementary School (black), 1952, Johns Island, Charleston County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Memminger Elementary School (white), 1953, Charleston, Charleston County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Morningside Elementary School (white), 1955, North Charleston, Charleston County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Six Mile Elementary School (black), 1955, North Charleston, Charleston County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Stono Park Elementary School (white), 1953, Charleston, Charleston County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Wallace Elementary and High School (black), 1952, Charleston, Charleston County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Georgetown County:

Andrews High School (white), 1955, Andrews, Georgetown County, identified in 2005 *Historic Resources of Georgetown County, South Carolina* survey, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Choppee High School, c.1955, Ramsey Grove, Georgetown County, identified in 2005 *Historic Resources of Georgetown County, South Carolina* survey, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Greenwood County:

Brewer High School (black), c.1954, Greenwood, Greenwood County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Horry County:

Cochran Elementary School (black), 1954, Conway, Horry County, identified in 2007 *Horry County Historic Resources Survey, South Carolina*, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Levister Elementary School (black), 1953, Loris, Horry County, identified in 2007 *Horry County Historic Resources Survey, South Carolina*, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Longs Elementary School (black), c. 1954, Longs, Horry County, identified in 2007 *Horry County Historic Resources Survey, South Carolina*, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Sweet Home Elementary School (white), 1953, Loris, Horry County, identified in 2007 *Horry County Historic Resources Survey, South Carolina*, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Lancaster County:

Central Elementary School (white), 1957, Lancaster, Lancaster County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Lee County:

Dennis High School (black), 1954 addition, Bishopville, Lee County, listed in the National Register of Historic Places

Richland County:

Florence Benson Elementary School (black), 1953, Columbia, Richland County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Spartanburg County:

Mary Wright Elementary School (black), 1951, Spartanburg, Spartanburg County, listed in the National Register of Historic Places

Union County:

Carlsan Elementary School, c.1954, Carlisle, Union County, eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Extant Schools that are Not Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places

Charleston County:

Albemarle Elementary School (white), 1953, Charleston, Charleston County, not eligible due to enclosed windows and altered entryways

Baptist Hill Elementary School and Baptist Hill High School (black), 1952, Hollywood, Charleston County, originally two separate schools that are currently combined into Baptist Hill High School; not eligible due to new entrance, additions, and alterations to windows

Haut Gap High School (black), 1952, Johns Island, Charleston County, not eligible due to enclosed and altered windows

James Island Elementary School (white), 1955, James Island, Charleston County, not eligible due to a large addition and a new entrance and façade

James Island High School (white), 1953, James Island, Charleston County, not eligible due to large additions and new buildings surrounding the historic school buildings

Jennie Moore Elementary School (black), 1952, Mt. Pleasant, Charleston County, not eligible due to altered and enclosed windows and altered entryway

Laing High School (black), 1953, Mt. Pleasant, Charleston County, not eligible due to extreme alterations to windows, layout, and façade of school

Lincoln High and Elementary School (black), 1953, McClellanville, Charleston County, not eligible due to altered and enclosed windows

Miley Hill Elementary School (black), 1955, Ravenel, Charleston County, not eligible due to alterations and altered windows

Moultrie High School (white), 1953, Mt. Pleasant, Charleston County, only gym/auditorium remains from 1953 construction

Rockville Elementary School (black), 1955, Johns Island, Charleston County, not eligible due to altered and enclosed windows

St. Andrews Elementary School (white), 1953, Charleston, Charleston County, not eligible due to altered and enclosed windows

Sullivan's Island Elementary School (white), 1955, Sullivan's Island, Charleston County, not eligible due to large addition and altered and enclosed windows

Clarendon County:

Scott's Branch High School (black), 1951, Summerton, Clarendon County, not eligible due to altered entryway, altered and enclosed windows, and installation of modern metal gable roof

Other Known Schools

Greenwood County:

Edgewood High School (black), c.1953, Ninety-Six, Greenwood County, two-story rural school with intact windows and entryway; needs formal evaluation and additional history

Newberry County:

Silverstreet Elementary School, 1956 addition, Silverstreet, Newberry County, 1956 addition to historic school; needs formal evaluation of history and integrity

Spartanburg County:

Southside/New Bethel Elementary School (black), c.1954, Woodruff, Spartanburg County; needs formal evaluation and additional history

The Bucksport Elementary School in Horry County was identified as an equalization school and determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as part of Horry County's responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Although the Bucksport Elementary School (black) was ultimately demolished for the new Bucksport Workforce Center, Horry County produced a detailed history and documentation of the school. As part of this history, Horry County identified

other equalization schools constructed in the county. This survey report and photographic documentation can be accessed through the South Carolina State Archives.²⁹

In 2005, Rebekah Dobrasko conducted a survey of Charleston County's equalization schools as part of the requirements for HIST 692: Charleston Field School through the University of South Carolina. The survey identified and recorded twenty-eight equalization schools. The State Historic Preservation Office determined thirteen of these schools to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The survey report and associated survey cards can be accessed through the South Carolina State Archives.³⁰

²⁹ William Green and Heather Jones, "Mitigation of Adverse Effects to the Bucksport Elementary School, Bucksport Workforce Center Project, Horry County, South Carolina," (Report by S&ME, Inc. submitted to Horry County, August 2007).

³⁰ Rebekah Dobrasko, "Architectural Survey of Charleston County's School Equalization Program, 1951-1955," (April 2005). The State Historic Preservation Office reviewed the report's recommendations on May 8, 2007. The recommendations on acceptable changes and integrity of the schools detailed in this historic context are based on the discussions of May 8, 2007.

V. Bibliography

The following bibliography is an extensive, but not comprehensive, list of sources used in researching and compiling information on South Carolina's school equalization program.

Manuscripts

Avery Research Center, Charleston, SC

Albertha Johnston Murray Papers.

Charleston County Black School Directory Collection.

J. Arthur Brown Papers.

Office of Archives and Records, Charleston County School District, Charleston, SC

Board Minutes, City Board of School Commissioners, School District 20.

District 2 Board Minute Books.

Photograph Collection.

South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, SC

Department of Education, School Building Construction and Renovation, Project Files.

Governor James F. Byrnes Papers.

Governor George Bell Timmerman, Jr. Papers.

Governor Ernest F. Hollings Papers.

National Register of Historic Places Files.

South Carolina Statewide Survey Files.

Special Collections, Clemson University Libraries, Clemson, SC

James Byrnes Collection.

Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC

Microfilmed Papers of the NAACP.

Newspapers

New York Times, 18 February 1951.

News and Courier (Charleston, SC), 1948-1955.

The State (Columbia, SC), 27 January 1955.

Government Documents

1950 United States Census of Population, General Characteristics, South Carolina.

Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, United States Government Printing Office, 1952.

Annual Reports of the State Superintendent of Education of the State of South Carolina, *Reports and Resolutions of South Carolina to the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina*. Columbia: State Budget and Control Board, 1945-1959.

Report of Committee Appointed to Study Ways and Means to Provide for Public School Education Needs, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the First Session of the 89th General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, being the Regular Session Beginning Tuesday, January 9, 1951*. Columbia: State Budget and Control Board, 1951.

“South Carolina’s Educational Revolution: A Report of Progress in South Carolina.” Columbia: The State Educational Finance Commission, c. 1954.

United States Department of the Interior. *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, 1997.

Educational Planning Publications

Brubaker, C. William. *Planning and Designing Schools*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998.

Campbell, Edward A. “New Spaces and Places for Learning.” *The School Review* 68, no. 3 (Autumn 1960): 346-352.

Caudill, William W. *Toward Better School Design*. New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1954.

Cutler, William W. “Cathedral of Culture: The Schoolhouse in American Educational Thought and Practice Since 1820.” *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 1-40.

Engelhardt, N.L., N.L. Engelhardt, Jr., and Stanton Leggett. *Planning Elementary School Buildings*. New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1953.

----- *Planning Secondary School Buildings*. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1949.

----- *School Planning and Building Handbook*. New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1956.

Engelhardt, Jr., N.L. “Trends in School Architecture and Design.” *Review of Educational Research* 12, no. 2, School Plant and Equipment (April 1942):” 171-177.

Guide for Planning School Plants, 1958 Edition. Washington, DC: National Council on Schoolhouse Construction, 1958.

Johnson, Charles S. "Next Steps in Education in the South." *Phylon (1940-1956)* 15, no. 1 (First Quarter 1954): 7-20.

Marsh, Reginald E. "Trends in Materials and Design." *Review of Educational Research* 15, no. 1, School Plant and Equipment (February 1945): 54-60.

McClurkin, W.D. *School Building Planning.* New York: The MacMillan Company, 1964.

McQuade, Walter, ed. *Schoolhouse.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958.

National Council of Chief State School Officers. *Planning Rural Community School Buildings.* New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949.

Pawley, Eric, ed. *AIA School Plant Studies, A Selection: 1952-1962.* New York: American Institute of Architects, 1962.

Public Schools of Charleston, South Carolina: A Survey Report. Nashville, TN: Division of Surveys and Field Services, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1949.

Public Schools of South Carolina: A Report of the South Carolina Education Survey Committee. Nashville, TN: Division of Surveys and Field Services, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1948.

Reavis, William C. "Functional Planning of School-Building Programs." *The Elementary School Journal* 46, no. 2 (October 1945): 72-80.

Reid, Kenneth, ed. *School Planning: The Architectural Record of a Decade.* New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1951.

Strevall, Wallace H. and Arvid J. Burke. *Administration of the School Building Program.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959.

Books, Articles, and Theses

Baker, R. Scott. "Ambiguous Legacies: The NAACP's Legal Campaign Against Segregation in Charleston, South Carolina, 1935-1975." Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1993.

- . *Paradoxes of Desegregation: African American Struggles for Educational Equity in Charleston, South Carolina, 1926-1972*. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2006.
- Baughn, Jennifer V. Opager. "Education, Segregation, and Modernization: Mississippi's School Equalization Building Program, 1946-1961." *Arris* 16 (2005): 37-55.
- Bolton, Charles C. "Mississippi's School Equalization Program, 1945-1954: 'A Last Gasp to Try to Maintain a Segregated Educational System.'" *The Journal of Southern History* 66, no. 4 (November 2000): 781-814.
- . *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle over School Integration in Mississippi, 1870-1980*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005.
- Brown, Millicent. "Civil Rights Activism in Charleston, South Carolina, 1940-1970." Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1997.
- Byrnes, James F. *All in One Lifetime*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958.
- Clark, Septima Poinsette. *Echo in My Soul*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1962.
- Clyburn, James with Jennifer Revels. *Uncommon Courage: The Story of Briggs v. Elliott, South Carolina's Unsung Civil Rights Battle*. Spartanburg, SC: Palmetto Conservation Foundation/PCF Press, 2004.
- DeLaine, J.A., Jr. *Briggs v. Elliott: Clarendon County's Quest for Equality*. Pine Brook, NJ: O. Gona Press, 2003.
- Dobrasko, Rebekah. "Upholding 'Separate but Equal': South Carolina's School Equalization Program, 1951-1955." MA thesis, University of South Carolina, 2005.
- Dubose, Sonny. *The Road to Brown: The Leadership of a Soldier of the Cross Reverend J.A. DeLaine*. Orangeburg, SC: Williams Publishing, 2002.
- Edmonds, Michael. "Dennis High School, Lee County." Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, listed 26 January 2005.
- Green, William and Heather Jones. "Mitigation of Adverse Effects to the Bucksport Elementary School, Bucksport Workforce Center Project, Horry County, South Carolina." Report submitted by S&ME, Inc. to Horry County, August 2007.
- Hornsby, Benjamin F. *Stepping Stone to the Supreme Court: Clarendon County, South Carolina*. Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1992.

- Kirk, Francis Marion. *South Carolina Education, 1710-1965*. Columbia: South Carolina Department of Education, 1966.
- Kluger, Richard. *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality*. New York: Vintage Books, 2004.
- Moore, Burchill Richardson. "A History of the Negro Public Schools of Charleston, South Carolina, 1867-1942." M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 1942.
- Moore, Robert, Edith Childs, and Wilhelmenia Robinson. *Brewer High School: More Than a School*. Donalds, SC: Voice of Truth, LLC, 2006.
- Murray, Pauli, ed. *States' Laws on Race and Color*. Studies in the Legal History of the South, eds. Paul Finkelman and Kermit L. Hall. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997.
- O'Brien, Thomas Victor. "Georgia's Response to *Brown v. Board of Education*: The Rise and Fall of Massive Resistance, 1949-1961." Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1992.
- Quint, Howard. *Profile in Black and White: A Frank Portrait of South Carolina*. Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1958.
- Richardson, Katherine. "African-American Primary and Secondary Public School Buildings in South Carolina, ca. 1895-1954," Multiple Property Submission to the National Register of Historic Places, listed 15 April 1996.
- Robertson, David. *Sly and Able: A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994.
- Smyth, William D. "Segregation in Charleston in the 1950s: A Decade of Transition." *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 92, no. 2 (April 1991): 99-123.
- Sullivan, Patricia. *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Tushnet, Mark. *The NAACP's Legal Strategy Against Segregated Education, 1925-1950*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987.
- Weyeneth, Robert R. "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematic Past." *The Public Historian* 27, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 11-44.
- Willingham, Debbie, ed. *The Stories of Our Schools: The School District of Greenville County*. Greenville, SC: Greenville County School District, 2000.